PAPERS

Given in to the

HONORABLE COMMITTEE

OF

LORDS and COMMONS

And Assembly of *Divines* with the Commissioners of *Scotland*,

FOR

ACCOMMODATION.

1644.

By a SUB-COMMITTEE of *Divines* of the Assembly and *Dissenting Brethren.*

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An Order of the Houſe of Commons for A Committee of Accommodation.

Septemb. 13. 1644.

THat the Committee of Lords and Commons appointed to treat with the Commiſſioners of Scotland, and the Committee of the Aſſembly, Do take into conſideration the differences of the opinions of the members of the Aſſembly in point of Church-government, and to indeavour an union if it be poſſible: And in caſe that cannot be done, to indeavour the finding out ſome way how far tender conſciences, who cannot in all things ſubmit to the ſame Rule, which ſhall be eſtabliſhed, may be borne with according to the Word, and as may ſtand with the publike peace; That ſo the proceedings of the Aſſembly may not be ſo much retarded.

This honourable Committee met according to the Order, *Septemb.* 20. following

THe appointment of the Order Being, *That the differences of opinions*, of the *members of the Assembly, in point of Church Government be taken into consideration.* The honourable *Committee* appointed a SUB-COMMITTEE of *six* of the Members of the Assembly. Mr. *Marshall*, Mr. *Hearle*, Master *Vines*, Dr. *Temple*, Mr. *Goodwin*, and Mr. *Nye*, (two of the dissenting brethren) To consider of *the differences of opinions in the Assembly, in point of Church-Government*: And to bring in what might be matter for that grand *Committee* to consider of.

In pursuance of this, the said *sub-Committee* met, who stiled themselves the *sub-Committee of* AGREEMENTS. And after the Preface declaring their mutuall confidence to *agree in one Confession of Faith*, and in *One Directory of publique worship*, &c. They prepared severall Propositions, concerning the Government of *particular Congregations*, and Ordination, &c. Declaring how farre in practicall principles they did agree therein, together with the different practices, which each according to their principles, desired.

October 11. 1644. The honourable *Committee* met againe, At which the *sub-Committee* presented the Propositions they had prepared, declaring they had further to bring in concerning *Classes* and *Synods*. And *what* might be the *way* of accommodation for the *dissenting brethren to enjoy Congregations amongst us*, according to their principles. All which (though they had met many dayes) was not as then perfected.

Therefore the honourable *Committee* did remit back to the said *sub-Committee* the Propositions then brought in, to be further explained, and as much, as might to be perfected against

gainſt the next meeting, adjourning *that Committee* untill *Tueſday October* 15.

When theſe *Propoſitions* that follow, were brought in by the *ſub-Committee*, as containing both a fuller explication, and the beſt way to accommodate their own and their *brethrens* principles in a practique way (which was the end of that honourable *Committee*) both for *Congregations*, and *Synods*, and the government thereof.

October 15. 1644. The honourable Committee of *Lords*, *Commons*, *Divines* of the *Aſſembly*, with the *Scotch-Commiſſioners* met. And theſe Propoſitions were read by Maſter *Vines* who was the *Chaire-man* of that *ſub-Committee*.

A Vote was paſt in the *Committee* to take them into conſideration. But that debate was not entred upon, becauſe it was the earneſt deſire of ſome that the *Rule* ſhould firſt be made complea te by the Aſſembly and the Houſes.

And there was a *Ceſſation* put upon the *honourable* Committee herein, by the honourable Houſe of Commons untill their further pleaſure.

Let the Reader take notice, *that in what particulars the* diſſenting brethren *do differ from the Propoſitions of the reſt of the* SUB-COMMITTEE, *or do expreſſe their deſires a part from them, there is a differing Character put in the Printing of them for the diſcerning thereof, and that in other things wherein they expreſſe not any* difference *or further* explanation, *they* agreed *to them.*

The PROPOSITIONS were as followeth.

At the *Sub-Committee of Agreements.*

IN confidence that we ſhall jointly agree in one Confeſſion of Faith, and in one Directory of the Publick worſhip of God, with the help of a Preface, we come according to our order to points of Government, and therein do agree as followeth.

1. That a particular congregation having ſuch officers as the word of God holds out, both for preaching and governing, is a Church that hath power in all Eccleſiaſticall affairs, which do only concern it ſelfe.

2. That theſe forementioned officers are to be ſo many in numb, er in every ſuch congregation, as that three or two at the leaſt may agree together in every act of government. By two at the leaſt we mean preaching or governing officers. But ſome of the Committee do hold that a preaching Presbyter ſhould concurre in the ſentence of excommunication and ſuſpenſion.

3. That theſe officers have power in thoſe things which are voted by the Aſſembly to be due unto them, and in ſuſpenſion and excommunication: Some of the Committee meaning that the major part of the officers have power to do it, the congregation not oppoſing it, in which caſe of oppoſition they hold fit that the officers do ſuſpend the act. *Others of the Committee ſaying that the Major part of the Officers have power to do it, if the Major part of the Brethren do conſent unto it by their Votes: ſo as the negative lies in the major part, either of the Officers or Brethren.*

And as for *Ordination*, we all hold, that where there are two preaching Presbyters at leaſt, ſuch a Presbytery may

may ordaine their own Elders. *But some of the Committee do further say that where there are two ruling Elders at least, they have power of ordaining Elders for that congregation, and in case there be no Elders* (*as at the first* in Ecclesia constituenda) *then the choice of Elders, by the people, with approbation of the neighbouring Ministers with fasting and prayer, may suffice.*

4. That the Elders of the congregation shall advise with the Classis in all cases of Excommunication before they proceed to it, and the Classis hath power to heare and determine: yet so, as the power of the Congregation be not concluded thereby in matter of Excommunication. *But some of the Committee do say that in whatsoever case they find difficult either in excommunication or in any other administration of their power, they shall first advise with some company or Classis of neighbour Ministers, as at the end of the foure following Propositions afterwards.*

5. For the *associating of Churches*, let there be in every County of this Kingdome, a certain number of select, godly and able Ministers of the word, within that County, to heare and determine the causes and differences in every congregation within the same, and let there be a certain number of select Church-governours assistant unto them: the first choyce of these to be made by the Parliament in such a way as they shall determine, and such number to have power of election from time to time of any Minister or Church-governour into any place among them, that is void by death or otherwise.

6. The Ministers and Ruling-governors, of every congregation within that County so associated, shall have power to debate and vote in that meeting from time to time in such cases as pertain to that particular congregation, except such of them as are complained of, or are parties in question.

7. A certain number of the aforesaid Ministers, and

Ruling-governours as do dwell near together, in the ſame Deanery or diviſion of that County, and who may with conveniency more frequently meet together, ſhall have power to heare and determine the cauſes and differences within the ſeverall congregations of that precinct.

8. Let Nationall Aſſemblies of Miniſters and others, be choſen from time to time, according as ſhal be appointed by the Parliament, as the neceſſity of the Churches affairs ſhall require.

To the fifth, ſixth, ſeventh and eighth, the whole Committee doth aſcent; *onely ſome of them doe deſire that the effect of that which hereafter followeth may for explanation ſake be inſerted.* viz. *That the Elders and Brethren of each Congregation in caſe they find any thing too hard for themſelves or have any controverſie among themſelves, may have liberty to adviſe with any of thoſe ſelect Elders, and others in the Province jointly or apart, or with the Elders of any other Churches, for the determining and compoſing the controverſie or reſolving of that difficulty, and in caſe they cannot be ſatisfied, them to have recourſe alſo to the advice and help of that Claſſis unto which they appertain, to ſolve and determine it.*

9 That the members of particular congregations do cohabit and live together within certain bounds and precincts of a pariſh under preaching and governing Officers: *unto which ſo far as it concerns the meer bounding of congregations ſome of the Committee do deſire that theſe proviſions may be added.*

1. *That they may have liberty to dwell in another Pariſh if the conſent of the Miniſter of that other pariſh be procured.*

2. *For Countrey villages that the limits be extended to take in from ſome one pariſh immediately adjoyning.*

We having weighed our Brethrens Principles, do find no probability of accommodation for them, ordinarily to enjoy congregations, unleſſe when it ſhall happen in a pariſh that

that the Minister cannot administer the Sacraments to all in the Parish, whom possibly the neighbour Ministers or the Classis may judge fit to be admitted; such persons shall have power to procure to themselves the Sacraments, either by the help of a neighbour Minister, or some other provision be made by a proportionable allowance out of the Tythes of the parish according to the wisedome of the State.

Whereunto our *Brethren* adde as followeth.

Or otherwise if in a parish it happen that there be a considerable number of such as cannot partake in the ordinances with the Minister and people there, they shall have liberty to dispose of themselves as a distinct Church, *and to choose a Minister or Ministers at their own charge to be maintained, to be their Pastor.*

If such a liberty shall seem in the wisedome of this honourable Committee *to be prejudiciall to the peace of the* Church, *as not to be permitted, we humbly desire the* doctrinall principles *wherein we differ about* Church-government *may be taken into serious consideration, and some other way of accommodation in practice thought upon, as shall seem fit to this honourable* Committee.

Concerning Classes and Synods.

1. At these meetings, let them pray, expound scripture, resolve difficult cases of conscience and preach the word.

2. They may dogmatically declare what the will of Christ is in such cases as are before them; And this judgment of theirs ought to be received with reverence, and obligation,

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as from an ordinance of Christ. *Some of the Brethren (though assenting) yet are bold to adde hereunto, that the judgment of any other, of those Elders in the province, or elsewhere, advised with, they doe in like manner looke at as the ordinance of Christ, and to have the like obligation in them.*

3. If the doctrine or practise of any particular congregation be erroneous, hurtfull or destructive to holinesse or the peace of that or other congregations, they are bound to give account thereof to the Classis or Synod. *Some of the Brethren adde to this, That the ground of this obligation to give account to the Classis or Synod is their being offended, or their Churches scandalized thereat.*

4. The Classis or Synod may examine, admonish, and in case of obstinacy declare against that congregation or any particular member in it, as the nature and degree of that offence shall require. *Some of the Brethren assent to such proceedings as towards a Church offending and scandalizing of them: but adde, That no such examination, admonition in any Classis or Assembly be extended to any particular person in that Church, but unto the Church it selfe, for not putting forth the power that Christ hath given them for reforming him.*

5. The Classis or Synod may judge touching any person who deserves excommunication, and may charge the severall congregationall Presbyteries whom it concernes to do it.

6. We conceive that in case the particular Eldership refuse to doe their duty, the Classis, may and ought not onely to withdraw communion from them, but also when need is, exercise the sentence of excommunication themselves. *Instead of this sixth Proposition, some of the Brethren do insert this, In case the aforesaid particular Churches and Elderships offending shall refuse to submit to this course, that then the Classis or Synod are to acquaint their congregations respectively, and so withdraw from them, denying Church-Communion and fellowship with them.*

7. In case of appeale if it appeare to the Classis that the sentence

ſentence was unjuſt, they may judge that the particular Presbytery ought to reverſe it: and in caſe they obſtinately refuſe to do it, the Claſſis may reverſe it. *Others of the Brethren only ſay that they are to proceed as in the former Article.*

8. The Claſſis or Synod have power to ordaine Miniſters for ſuch congregations as have not a ſufficient presbytery in them, and let all congregations aſſociated, firſt adviſe with the Claſſis, and take their aſſiſtance before they ordain a Miniſter. *Some of the Brethren do referre themſelves for this, to the laſt clauſe in the third Propoſition delivered in.*

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